

# News of the arts

## Last of the Seven still active

A.J. Casson, sole surviving member of the Group of Seven, recently attended the opening of a special collection of 87 of his works at the Art Gallery of Windsor, Ontario. The opening marked Casson's eightieth birthday.

The artist, known as the pictorial biographer of the small communities of Ontario, inherited from his older colleague, Franklin Carmichael, a high regard for craftsmanship. There are no accidents or meaningless flourishes in his creative vocabulary, and his stylistic evolution has been a gradual one, free of sudden leaps into new techniques or thematic novelties.

Casson's independence and regard for tradition brought him the respect of a wide spectrum of artists and allowed him to be a president of the Royal Canadian Academy as well as a member of the path-finding Group of Seven and the Canadian Group of Painters.

For many years, he joined his career as a painter with that of a designer and executive for Sampson-Matthews Limited, a Toronto printing house, where Carmichael and other distinguished Canadian painters were employed. There, Casson created some of the most outstanding commercial art ever produced in Canada.



Casson painted Pike Lake in 1929.

As one of the finest water-colourists in Canadian art, Casson learned his technique from Carmichael and, with him, was a founding member of the Canadian

Society of Painters in Water Colour.

Casson is represented in the McMichael Canadian Collection by half-a-century of his art.

## Inquiry into theatre training

A comprehensive study on theatre training in Canada notes basic differences in the situation and needs of English- and French-language theatre training in Canada and recommends several means of redefining and improving training in all the theatre arts: acting, directing, design, production, administration and artistic direction.

The 164-page report is the work of a committee of five independent specialists set up by the Canada Council in September 1976. Having noted that "there are far too many anglophone acting schools" in Canada, the committee recommends that their number be reduced to four, and that each school have a distinctive and possibly regional character. An effort towards regionalization is also urged for Quebec, where it is suggested that the theatre options currently offered by two Montreal area community colleges be transplanted to Sherbrooke and the Lac St-Jean region.

Across the country, most of the schools, universities and conservatories are asked to clarify their role and objectives and to institute pedagogical reforms. In particular, they should desegregate the teaching of the various theatre crafts and assume responsibility for the retraining of teachers and theatre artists. The authors of the report also suggest that experienced theatre professionals take more interest in the training and career of younger artists, and they urge greater co-operation between the universities and the professional theatre.

The committee has recommended that the National Theatre School of Canada promote "shared cultural experiences" between its francophone and anglophone students. The English-language section of the school is encouraged to "improve its national profile", at the same time maintaining the international dimension of the training offered. It has advised the Montreal Conservatory to provide apprenticeship in theatre and related media, and the conservatory in Quebec City to work

towards the development of regional theatre.

In the course of its inquiry, the committee sent questionnaires and held public meetings and personal interviews with practitioners of the various theatre arts as well as with representatives of theatre companies, schools, unions, and professional associations.

## Arts brief

The National Ballet of Canada was compared favourably with the world's leading ensembles in a review by Roland Langer in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* newspaper, recently. Said Langer, "It becomes clear that the Canadian National Ballet is on par with such excellent ensembles as the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre and the London Royal Ballet." The company toured Germany and The Netherlands before returning to Canada earlier this month.